**Discussion Questions for The Whistle Walk**

1. Lydia is nervous about her wedding and leaving her home. In the first chapter of the book, we see her hiding in the barn and acting like a child. Why do you think she has such a difficult time with the concept of “becoming a lady of her own home?”
2. Ruth and her sister Bridget are responsible for the fire that ultimately destroys their home and their family. Why do you think they may have taken such a risk by stealing flour, and how do you think the tragedy affected Ruth throughout the story?
3. In the first part of the book, you are introduced to two very different ways of life in the old South. How do Lydia’s and Ruth’s perspectives compare and contrast? While there are obvious differences in lifestyle, do you find any similarities in the way they think and act?
4. Ruth struggles with the pain in her past, yet tries to hold firm to her faith. How do you think this attitude bleeds into her everyday life and service at Ironwood?
5. Lydia discovers she has more in common with the people she had always been taught were beneath her than she ever thought possible. After Lydia and Ruth share their painful pasts, how do you think this may have altered how they saw each other?
6. Lydia believes she may have killed a man. How do you think this affects her? Do you think Charles’s reaction to the incident and his acceptance after she shares her past play a part in her turning to God?
7. Ruth begins addressing Lydia as “Mrs. Harper”, then “Miss Lydia”, and finally simply as “Lydia”. When and why do you think these changes occur?
8. Ruth is torn between her love for Noah (and the hope of finding a good man to share her life with) and staying with Lydia. Why do you think she chooses to stay instead of run with the other slaves?
9. Lydia decides to free the slaves of Ironwood. What do you think it would be like for a woman during this time to make such a bold declaration? How do you think Lydia may have felt as she stood on the balcony looking over all the people of Ironwood?
10. When Ironwood becomes occupied by the Union army, things change drastically for Lydia and Ruth. How are some of their roles altered? Do you think these changes will affect life at Ironwood going forward?
11. Did you find any symbolism in the story? What do you think Ironwood came to represent to its people?
12. Were there any parts of the story that you could relate to? Did you find anything in Lydia and Ruth’s story that mirrors struggles women still deal with today?